IUR

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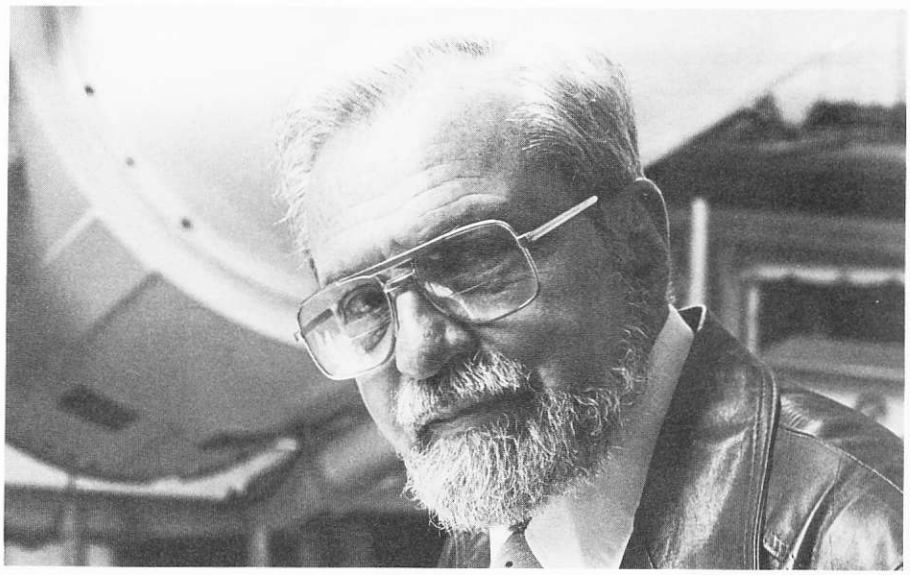
# The Stockay St-Georges landing

# INTERNATIONAL UFO REPORTER

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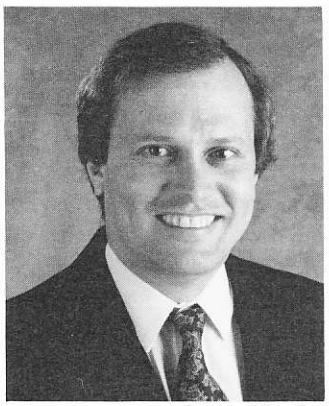
EDITORIAL

# Let us now praise Ed Ruppelt



*Jerome Clark*

As I was doing the research for my soon-to-be-published book *The Emergence of a Phenomenon: UFOs from the Beginning Through 1959—The UFO Encyclopedia, Volume 2* (yes, that's a long title and a shameless plug), I spent well over a year immersed in materials from the early days of the UFO era. Though the work was hard and the book, for which I wrote all but two entries, is thick (close to 300,000 words), I have never enjoyed a writing project so thoroughly, nor have I learned so much from one.

Of the many delights I experienced, one of the greatest came out of getting reacquainted with Edward J. Ruppelt's *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* (1956), the first book on the subject I ever read—I was 10 years old at the time—and one that, I was happy to find, is even better than I remembered it. Even with all the primary documents now available to us courtesy of the Freedom of Information Act and other sources, Ruppelt's remains the fullest and most informative account of what went on inside the early Air Force UFO projects—at least the public ones; there is, of course, no Majestic-12 or "Unholy 13" here.

The book's accuracy, which we can now test against relevant documents, is striking (with one exception; Ruppelt entirely misunderstood the attitudes and motives of the Robertson panel). Blue Book has a richly deserved reputation for investigative malfeasance, but as one reads *Report* along with the internal Blue Book case material on the investigations Ruppelt directed, one can only admire their thoroughness and respect their conclusions —which are nearly always the same ones you and I would have come to had we been there. The late James E. McDonald said it best: The Ruppelt era (from the fall of 1951 through late summer 1953) was a "'heroic period' . . . the one interval during which UFOs were seriously and relatively vigorously investigated," after which "began a sort of new dark age when debunking and superficial investigations came once again to characterize [Blue Book's] response to the UFO problem."

Another point, an obvious one yet seldom remarked on, is that *Report* is among the most engagingly written of all UFO books. Ruppelt knows how to tell stories in an adult voice (as Donald Keyhoe, who seemed always to be addressing an audience of *Boy's Life* readers, did not); he gives us a sense of the personalities of participants and the internal politics of the Air Force; he is not afraid to express opinions, and he has a wry sense of humor.

Someone told me recently that according to rumor the book was either ghostwritten or edited with all the vigor of a Maxwell Perkins reshaping Thomas Wolfe's prose. If that's not true (and I hope it's not), it's easy to understand how such a rumor could have gotten started. Who could believe a mere Air Force captain, and an engineer at that, could write so well?

The Air Force hated *Report*. So did the pre-CSICOP civilian UFOphobes who saw those who gave aid and comfort to the UFO heresy as traitors to the cause of intellectual conformity. When a *New York Times* reviewer depicted Ruppelt as a virtual flying-saucer "cultist," Blue Book's then-head, Capt. Charles A. Hardin, gleefully quoted these and other scathing remarks in a letter to Gen. Harold E. Watson of Air Force Intelligence. In October 1958 a secret Air Force Intelligence staff study fretted about public-relations problems caused by the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), which was vigorously lobbying for Congressional hearings into UFO secrecy. The report charged that NICAP director Keyhoe, whom it called a "political adventurer," had entered into an anti-Air Force alliance with Ruppelt.

This was a bizarre accusation. Keyhoe had been thrilled with *Report*, which supported Keyhoe's view that UFOs were serious business and his suspicion that many people within the Air Force agreed. Yet Ruppelt's book had also sniped at Keyhoe, whose accusations of a massive cover-up Ruppelt rejected. Moreover, Ruppelt had refused Keyhoe's invitation to become a NICAP special adviser. If the Air Force knew this, it gave no sign; all it seemed to know was that Ruppelt had refused to parrot the party line. He was not a good soldier.

But he *was* a good soldier. When *IUR* contributing editor Jennie Zeidman and I discussed the idea of her doing an article on her memories of Blue Book, I asked her specifically to include something about Ruppelt. Her recollection of him, as it turned out, was slight; of him she would write (in the March/April issue) only that he was a "by-the-book sobersides" who never smiled. Thus

*continued on page 24*

# The Belgian wave

by Patrick Vidal and Michel Rozencwajg

**■■ Patrick Vidal, former editor of the Belgian magazine *Inforespace*, is a French ufologist now living in Holland. Michel Rozencwajg is a Belgian psychologist. Vidal and Rozencwajg direct the European UFO Network (Eurofon). This article, translated in part by Ken Phillips, first appeared in *Eurofon News* 2.**

## CE2 at Stockay St-Georges

The following incident took place on the evening of Friday, May 4, 1990, in the small village of Stockay (Liege Province), Belgium. The witness, a 72-year-old archaeologist, had made some important discoveries in his region. Consequently his name is well known in archaeological and historical circles. In other words, he is a learned and rational man. Prior to his sighting UFOs were merely some unknown electromagnetic phenomenon.

When the encounter occurred, the weather was warm. As was his custom, MD went outside to close the door of the greenhouse in his garden. The instant he closed the door, his cat came to him and nestled between his legs. At that moment the dogs in the neighborhood began howling in a way MD and his wife had never heard them sound before. On his return to the house, MD noticed with astonishment a luminous mass with a well-defined outline. It was located in a meadow less than 200 meters from him.

He ran to his neighbors' house to alert them but received no response when he called them. He went back to his house, where his wife was watching television. He asked her if she had noticed any interference, and when she wanted to know why he had asked that question, he told her of the ball of light in the meadow.

The two went out to look, proceeding slowly because the woman had recently undergone surgery and could not move easily. There, in the front of their house, they observed a cone-shaped structure. The top part of it had a mushroomlike appearance.

After five minutes the wife decided to go back inside. Her husband went with her, then returned to the site. He walked alongside his field and came up to the area where his cattle were penned. He spoke to the animals for some moments to reassure them. The dogs continued howling while the strange object remained motionless and silent throughout. At this point MD was about 100 to 150 feet from the object, which he thought looked quite solid.

The bottom part was luminous and opaque, the center part a white color, the edges yellowish. MD had never seen so much light.

As he approached a nearby house occupied by a primary school teacher, he called out, but no one answered. Her gate was open, so he went through. This put him only 40 to 50 meters from the cone, which looked to be 8-10 meters in diameter at the base; it seemed to be four to five meters high. At this instant the upper part (the mushroom shape) rose up, detaching itself from the rest of the object, and in so doing turned to an intense orange color.

By now the whole event had taken on an unreal character to MD, who also began to sense his helplessness. Here he was alone and old. With nothing but slippers on his feet, he would not be able to flee very quickly even if he had to. Still, unable to shake his intense interest in the sight, he retreated only a dozen paces. Soon the cupola of the object descended back to the rest of the UFO, and its color returned to its original white.

Finally MD made his way back to the house, where he met his wife on the landing. The two watched the spectacle from that vantage for a few minutes more, then went back inside. Their son, who owns a video camera, was not home, unfortunately.

Over the next few days MD, usually relaxed, was nervous. He was unable to sleep and suffered from an accelerated pulse rate. The day following the encounter, the son went to the spot where the object was seen and filmed four circular ground traces set out in the shape of a rectangle eight meters by 10 meters. Located in the center of each circle (about one meter in diameter), the grass was twisted and depressed. A fine yellowish powder was visible on the blades of grass.

The flowers at the periphery of the traces did not suffer from the effects of the turbulence, and they remained intact. Some days later the traces vanished. In the proximity of the site there is an abandoned shaft, and less than 300 meters away there is a geological fault as well as a small stream.

## Athus landing

At 5:30 a.m. on Tuesday, October 23, 1990, the radio alarm sounded, waking Regine, a young woman who resides on the outskirts of Athus, near Luxembourg. She arises early each week day to prepare for her job at a bank in Luxembourg. She has worked there for 10 years.

Once out of bed she drew back the bedroom curtains. She was amazed to see, at 400 meters' distance, a luminous phenomenon on or just above a nearby hill. It consisted of two bright headlights which were directed toward her. She thought at first that they were the headlights of a jeep, but then she realized they were too bright. Between these two lights a third—smaller and blue—was visible. Regine opened the window but heard no sound.

Ten minutes later, to the witness' considerable astonishment, the lights rose together and some meters off the ground, then slowly progressed in the direction of Athus—in other words, toward her. The two lights wavered toward the ground which then became lit up as if by searchlights.

Regine grew frightened as the object (by now she understood the lights were attached to an object) moved slowly in utmost silence. A few moments later it passed over the house. As it did so, she noticed a small red light on its lower part. She rushed into her dining room and there regained sight of the object, still heading in the same direction toward the center of the town. Soon thereafter the object veered to the left, in the direction of Luxembourg, and rapidly disappeared in the distance.

When we came to investigate, the witness told us that she had first seen the UFO near some high-tension cables. She also thought it may not have rested on the ground but hovered a small distance above it. We searched in vain for ground traces.

The object looked circular and was about the size of an automobile, Regine told us. We were alerted to the case by the Gendarmerie at Athus and were told she was regarded as reliable.

## Escorted by a UFO

On Sunday, October 21, at 10:05 p.m., a woman and her son, Stephane, 15, residents of Bastogne, were returning home after a family visit in Gouvy. The sky was clear.

The Lada they were driving was going along the E25, the usual route Mme. Henquinet took on such trips. But this evening, for no particular reason, she decided to leave the motorway at the Mabompre interchange so as to access the N30 which connects Houfalize with Bastogne. When we interviewed them, Stephane remarked that both he and his mother felt his desire to travel the N30, though it was something they had not done before.

Suddenly and rapidly two light sources descended toward them. "They're coming for us!" the mother shouted. But the lights were lost to sight the moment the witnesses arrived at the crossroads leading to N30. The Lada turned to the right in the direction of Bastogne. It had traveled no more than a few meters when a large luminous shape appeared just behind the hedge bordering the right-hand side of the road.

Though stunned, Mme. Henquinet thought that possibly the light was just a reflection on the car window. But when she lowered it, the object was still there at eye level about a dozen meters from the car.

She resumed travel, with the phenomenon accompanying the car at the same speed. Later Mme. Henquinet decided to stop the car, but as she slowed down, the object behind the trees did the same. Badly frightened, Stephane pleaded with his mother to drive on, but the object continued to pace them however fast they drove. It was as if, the woman said, "they had their foot on my accelerator."

But when they reached the end of the roadside hedge, the object approached them. Mme. Henquinet braked, and Stephane ran out of the car. The two saw a dark mass, more than 15 meters across, rise up rapidly and silently into the sky. On the lower part of the object was a circle of seven or eight lights.

At this moment a car arrived from the other direction, and the two excited witnesses returned to their home in Bastogne. Mme. Henquinet had trouble sleeping.

The two told us that they felt from the outset that they had been confronted by a nonhuman intelligence. They were also convinced that they had been induced into using the N30. Furthermore, they said, they thought the object had left because they had passed the edge and another car was coming. We noted that behind this hedge there are some large meadows but no roads or dwellings.

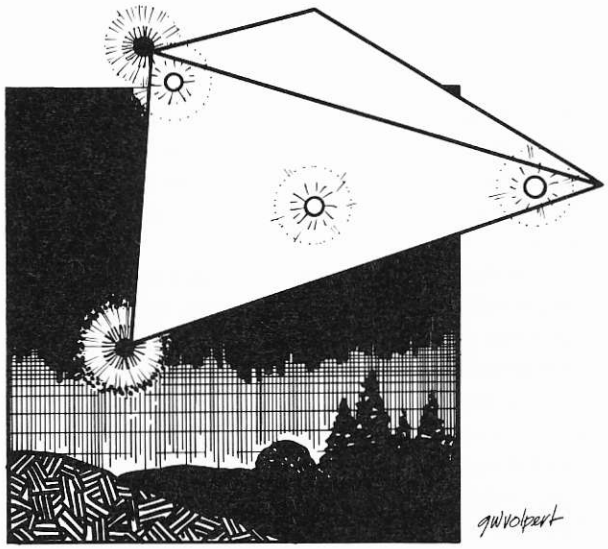
## Flying pyramid

The incident that follows took place on Tuesday, October 23, 1990, at Pepinster (Verviers). The witnesses telephoned us, and we quickly went to the location, where we met three of the four young observers.

At 9:25 on the evening in question, the four witnesses, aged 15 to 17, found themselves in the upper part of the village, near the home of one of them. The sky was clear with a number of stars visible. Suddenly, apparently coming from behind a hill, they saw an unusual object with some extremely bright lights. They had the impression that the object, less than 500 meters from them, was taking off, inasmuch as it was flying at a low altitude.

The UFO progressed slowly toward Verviers-Battice in total silence. The object displayed on its lower part three bright white lights directed toward the ground and set out in the form of a triangle. At the center of this triangle a steady red light was visible.

The object was shaped like a pyramid with the apex pointing forward. At the base end there were two other red lights. The sighting lasted for about 30 seconds. The UFO disappeared from sight behind a hill.




*The flying pyramid of Pepinster*

During the preceding months the young witnesses had also observed the now-famous flying triangle but at a relatively higher (though still low) altitude. They had been surprised by the impressive size of the object, by the brilliance of its lights, and by its silence as well as its slow pace. That same evening, at around 10:25, the parents of one of the lads saw a lozenge-shaped object which was adorned on each of the apexes by a steady light. Flying at a low altitude, the UFO was heading slowly and silently in the direction of Pepinster-Cornesse.

## Landing traces at Jupille

At 2:15 a.m. on December 12, 1989, a dull "throbbing" sound woke MF. Thinking there was a problem with the circulation pump of the central heating boiler, he grabbed a small flashlight, put on his jacket, and made his way to the boiler. But even after he shut off the pump, he could still hear the sound.

He decided that its source must be outside, so he stepped into the night. The sky was clear, and the moon was full, but his attention immediately focused on an earthbound object: an enormous oval which seemed jammed between two fir trees on one side and some trees bordering a road on the other.

Because of the light cast by the moon, MF could see the UFO clearly. On its circumference small lights were changing color from blue to red and back. The object itself was metallic, with a kind of oar or paddle at its rear. At the front the witness could distinguish what he thought to be a window or a cockpit.

Also on the front part of the object the witness could make out a sort of "logo" consisting of several ellipses crossing themselves. At each extremity of the ellipses shone a small light. The effect, the witness said, was like something "out of one of the novels of Jules Verne." The metal on this machine did not look new; it gave every appearance of having been submitted to harsh treatment.

After a few minutes the object rose slightly. Each time it did so, the sound it emitted changed. Next it advanced slowly toward a neighbor's meadow, shining down three beams of lights which appeared progressively underneath.

Following this display, the object positioned itself so that it was hidden from view by a neighbor's house. Some moments later a shaft of light shot out toward the sky. The light was intense and well defined, and the witness did not dare to go forward to investigate further. Instead he went back to bed.

The next morning MF briefly considered the possibility that he had been dreaming, but the sight of his jacket lying on the armchair indicated otherwise. After he reported his experience to the Gendarmerie, a number of representatives, along with those from local police forces, descended on the site.

In the afternoon the Army arrived. An NCO told him some tests would be taken of the ground. MF, in the company of the Gendarmerie, found a gigantic circular trace in the meadow. At the center of it the grass had been shorn as if by a masterly sweep of a lawn mower. But the grass cuttings were nowhere to be seen, and the grass within the trace had turned a yellow color.

As the official investigation went on, MF offered his assistance, but his testimony was not listened to carefully. It was "as if they knew what it was all about," MF told us. He had the distinct impression that the authorities were trying to cordon off the site and seemed not to view kindly the presence of a civilian. (We suggested to him the such precautions were probably done to ensure an efficient survey.)

Later the witness phoned the Gendarmerie in Wandre to inquire about the results of the analysis. The Gendarmes said they knew no more than he did.

The same night of MF's sighting, an old woman and another witness heard the same noise but had not gone out to check its source. A journalist living in the area had been awakened by a light outside. He thought his balcony light was still on and went back to sleep.

Sometime later MF went to Trond where he looked for a man who he heard had taken some photos of three similar objects. Unable to find his house, MF went to the Gendarmerie and related his story to them. A Gendarme there showed him a headquarters map on which a trajectory of the Trond UFO was traced. On the strength of the observations that had taken place and from his extrapolation of the trajectory, MF established that the UFO movement depicted there would have caused the object to pass by the spot where his home is located in Jupille. When MF met the Trond witness, the latter admitted there was a resemblance between what he had seen and what MF had sketched.

MF was able to see the photos in question, but because they were taken at night with an insufficiently fast film, the result was disappointing. At that time we did not know what had become of the site surveys, but clearly the authorities were taking the affair seriously.

Though uninterested in MF's testimony, the military went to the site only hours after his observation, seemingly knowing more about the event than they were prepared to admit. Who alerted them? The Army does not say.

## Lights on the ground

This incident took place on November 22, 1990, at Fluerus, a village in the region of Charleroi.

Mme. Bouffioux, a young woman who lived near the train station, was lying in bed, awake but with her eyes closed, when she sensed that an intense light had penetrated her room. She opened her eyes, noticed that it was 5:28 a.m. on her radio alarm, got up, and went toward the window, which looks out on a garden.

The window panes were covered with vapor. As she wiped them with the back of her hand, she learned that the bright white light was emanating from behind the wall bordering her neighbor's garden. The source was 25 meters from her, just behind the garden wall and in an abandoned field.

After a period the light ceased, and Mme. Bouffioux perceived bluish flashes ejecting out to the right of the spot where the light was last seen. Some seconds later a train was heard in the distance. Some seconds later a train was heard in the distance, coming toward the station. Immediately the flashes ceased.

The neighbors noticed nothing unusual. We went to the site but found no traces. There were no electric cables on or near the ground. The field is strewn with rubbish.

## Daytime observation

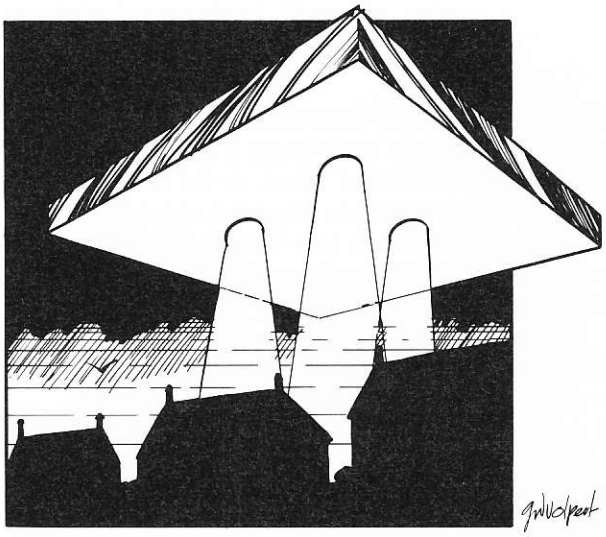
In early January 1990, in the province of Liege, two young women living in Neu-Moresnet were traveling from there to Battice. The sky was gray, and the clouds hung low. Around 10:30 a.m., as they approached the heights near Clermont, the two witnessed a bizarre object to their right. It was moving at a low altitude, something like 300 to 400 meters.

Dark and massive, it resembled an iron ironing as seen from underneath. The object had an estimated size twice that of the fighter aircraft that fly over the region (F-16s, Mirages) and was visible for a few seconds. It disappeared from view behind a farmhouse.

What further intrigued the two women was that, some dozens of meters further on in their journey, when they ought to have seen the object again, it was no longer there. The object in no way resembled the planes that frequently pass over the region.

## Immense object

The first case occurred on the evening of November 29, 1989. The witness, in his 50s and living in Grace-Hollogne (on the edge of Liegeoise), was alone in his vehicle. It was 6:45 p.m., and he was passing some industrial installations near Bierset on his way to pick up his wife before returning home.



*Immense object over the Mathieu de Lexchy road*

He was taking the Mathieu de Lexchy road which is bordered by dwelling of one form or another. Beyond these houses to the right can be found a colliery, some wasteland, and warehouses. Having traveled on about 100 meters to the crossroads with the Rue Hector Denige, the driver suddenly perceived, to his left and over the wasteland, an immense stationary object at 100 meters' altitude and 500 meters' distance from him.

Understandably surprised, the witness lowered his window while cruising by at 20 kmh. Because his car engine was relatively silent, he was able to detect a sound emanating from the phenomenon—a soft sound of an electric motor, according to him. The object remained stationary. It was shaped like a huge lozenge and was much larger than a Boeing 707. It had flashing light, and beams of light were being directed toward the ground. The lights were red, green, and white.

At the UFO's center the surface was slightly sunken. The structure appeared to be made of dark metal.

The witness resumed his trip, leaving the object while it was still visible.

## Electromagnetic interference

The witness, a gamekeeper (and also a correspondent with the Royal Institute of Meteorology), lives in an isolated area in the region of Cordes (Tournai). His job requires him to be outdoors at night frequently.

The first observation goes back to April or May 1990 —the witness no longer remembers the precise date—at about 2 or 3 a.m. Having returned home, he entered his dining room and, in so doing, perceived through a window a pinkish-red luminous ball moving halfway up some trees bordering on a neighboring meadow. This ball was about 1.5 meters in diameter, but it quickly flattened into an elongated shape. The witness compared the phenomenon's appearance to that of a football (soccer

ball) bladder which had been elongated. The object advanced horizontally and rounded a small wood located behind the witness' house. At the time of the observation the witness was situated at about 150 meters from the luminous ball. The spheroid flew slowly—10 to 20 kmh—and once it had rounded the wood, it disappeared from view.

The second observation was more recent and stranger than the first. The time was 2:25 a.m., and the witness sat in his car listening to the radio. His CB was on stand-by, and the dashboard lights were on. Suddenly the radio, CB, and lights went off, plunging the witness into darkness. Assuming the loss of power to be attributable to a faulty ignition, he tried in vain to restart the car engine.

At this juncture, from behind his car came an intense glow which instantly enveloped the vehicle and momentarily blinded the gamekeeper. As soon as his sight cleared, the witness decided to get out of his car. He had one foot out the door when the illumination ceased.

At practically the same moment, the ignition came back on, and the CB, radio, and dashboard lights all started to function again. The witness told us that colleagues on duty at the same place that night had had similar experiences. According to a logbook of lightning activity kept by the witness, there were no reports of lightning that evening.

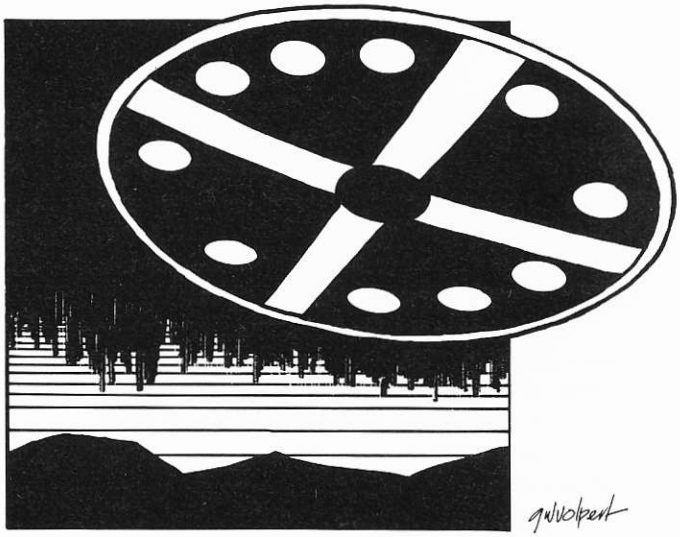
On the night of November 4/5, at the same location, the witness observed the slow descent of a luminous mass, the splendor of which intensified in proportion to the phenomenon's proximity to the ground. The luminous mass then stabilized just over a grove of trees, the crests of which became illuminated. (The grove was about 1.5 kilometers from the witness.) The object then turned over the wood and slowly directed itself toward the village of Forest, where it was lost to sight.

## Over the Ring of Brussels

Sunday, December 9, 1990, was a cold, overcast day, and snow was falling. At 9:30 that evening Mme. Cortvriendt and her husband, following the "Ring of Brussels," were coming up to a four-branch crossroads. As the car was following the turn-off to Waterloo, Mme. Cortvriendt saw, in the distance to her right, a luminous triangle. Oddly given the weather conditions, she could now perceive—at some distances of meters away through the vehicle's right-hand window—a gigantic circular plate over the crests of some trees. On its circumference the UFO carried a multitude of white lights which were as bright as diamonds.

Arrayed from the center of the object toward its periphery were four arms in the shape of a cross. These arms were brass-colored. Mme. Cortvriendt thought they were exhaust pipes because white fumes resembling steam were pouring from them.

The UFO was at an altitude of 50 meters.



*Close encounter over the Ring of Brussels*

The car, which could not stop in the middle of a motorway, continued on its way, and the object was lost to view heading in the opposite direction, toward Zaventem.

One of us (M.R.) had two long conversations with Mme. Cortvriendt. She was obsessed with the sighting. The day after it, she drew a detailed color sketch of the object, placing it in darkness in front of a luminous source so that she could reproduce the sight as closely as possible. She said she thought of the encounter night and day and was losing sleep over it. She confided (with no prompting of any kind) that she was experiencing mental images of a small being with large eyes.

The persistence of this image over a period of weeks convinced the witness that the UFO was occupied by beings from elsewhere.

## Plates and rectangles

On Sunday, January 6, 1991, between 6 and 6:30 p.m., two groups of witnesses journeying along the motorway E411 reported the fly-over, at a low altitude, of a gigantic plate-shaped object with many lights on its surface. The first group of witnesses, four members of a family, reported seeing a rectangular object with cupola as it passed over Spontin heading toward Namur.

At 6:30 a precisely similar report came from a family in Bouge. These witnesses were coming from Brussels and had reached a spot a little before the Beez Viaduct. To the left of the road three lights appeared. At first they were assumed to be from a soccer field. But a second look revealed they were part of a vehicle hovering over a quarry. One of the witnesses, Mr. Hardy, an Army veteran, estimated the UFO to be close to 80 meters long and 10 to 15 meters high, with the forward three lights embedded in the form of a rectangle and a red light on the lower rear end.

The underbelly as well as the upper part was bulged out and was of a dark gray hue. On the side 15 "portholes" were lit up in white. The rear end presented a flat

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# UFO abductions at the event level

by Budd Hopkins

■■ **Budd Hopkins, author of *Missing Time* (1981) and *Intruders* (1987), is director of the Intruders Foundation (Box 30233, New York, New York 10011). The article that follows is the slightly edited text of a lecture delivered in Santa Barbara, California, in November 1990, at a conference sponsored jointly by CUFOS and the Santa Barbara Centre for Humanistic Studies.**

The reports we are considering may well disclose evidence of the most important event on our planet since the beginnings of sentient life. Either we are being visited by some kind of alien intelligence, equipped with a technology and purpose beyond our present-day understanding, or the power of human invention, delusion, and self-deception is, in the language of another earthly issue, reaching critical mass. Do these thousands of reports of UFO abductions and subsequent medical experiments describe actual events, or are they some new, pervasive, world-wide form of fantasy?

Those who recall their own UFO-abduction encounters are convinced that what happened to them is real, while those who have not experienced such traumatic events usually reject the idea that such things are even possible. Experience, our surest and most persuasive teacher, provides each group a convincing but contradictory lesson. Waiting patiently in the wings, however, is a more formal and obviously more learned tutor—recorded history—always ready for an instructive dialogue with the present. And history does, in fact, provide a specific parallel with the issue I have posed: the problem of separating fantasy from reality in the case of UFO-abduction reports. Naturally the current circumstances are different from those of an earlier time—they always are—but the historical analogy nevertheless has something important to tell us.

In the last decade of the 19th Century, in Vienna, Sigmund Freud was treating his neurotic patients by a slowly evolving personal therapy which included hypnosis as part of the technique. As the months and years passed Freud found that most of his patients recalled, both in conscious recollection and through hypnosis, disturbing incidents of childhood sexual molestation, seduction, and abuse. He therefore posited the eminently reasonable theory that these incestuous childhood sexual incidents had led to the later neurotic—hysterical—problems from which his patients suffered. It was a sensible theory which, for a number of reasons, he was soon to abandon.

Obviously it had been difficult for Freud to accept the idea that incestuous behavior was widespread among the good bourgeois Catholic and Jewish Viennese who were his patients, neighbors, and peers. And in the meantime he had also begun to realize that children and even infants possessed their own form of developing sexuality, surely Freud's most significant discovery. For these and other, apparently more personal reasons too complex to discuss in this paper, Freud had a drastic change of mind. He decided that these commonly reported memories of childhood sexual abuse—recollections that often came to light through the process of hypnotic regression—were nothing more than elaborate fantasies invented by his neurotic male and female patients. These sexual seductions and molestations had never happened; they were merely the wishful dreams and imaginings of hysterical people, originating inside their heads rather than in the physical world. Though this explanation required the acceptance of the idea that a child's mind was a steamier and more complex place than previously imagined, on another level we could all breathe easier; incest and the sexual abuse of children were largely imaginary.

In *An Autobiographical Study* of 1925, Freud described his view of his admittedly disturbed patients this way:

"I must mention an error into which I fell for a while and which might well have had fatal consequences for the whole of my work. Under the influence of the technical procedure which I used at that time [hypnosis], the majority of my patients reproduced from their childhood scenes in which they were sexually seduced by some grown-up person . . . . I believed these stories, and consequently supposed that I had discovered the roots of the subsequent neurosis . . . . My confidence was strengthened by a few cases in which relations of this kind with a father, uncle or elder brother had continued up to an age at which memory was to be trusted. If the reader feels inclined to shake his head at my credulity, I cannot altogether blame him."

Freud was obviously deeply embarrassed at having temporarily believed that childhood sexual abuse might

be relatively common in repressed 19th-Century Viennese families. We know, now, that Freud was right to feel that way, but not for the reason he stated. We know that incest, childhood seduction, and sexual abuse are common now and undoubtedly were common then, when Freud decided that these traumatic accounts were mere fantasies. The psychological problems many of his patients faced were more likely the result of real events than artifacts of wishful, self-generated fantasies. Freud, it must always be remembered, was a therapist and a theoretical, analytical thinker, not an investigator. Since his theories led him to discount automatically a patient's sexual-molestation memories, he apparently made no effort to examine the possible objective reality of these claims. Naturally he never visited the patient's house to conduct interviews with other members of the family, nor would he attempt in any way to ascertain if his patient might have actually been the victim of adult depredations. He was a physician, a healer, not a detective, and for him the problems began and ended inside the patient's damaged psyche.

It has been only in the last few decades that trained psychiatric social workers, sociologists and other mental health professionals have—unlike Freud—begun to investigate the event-level reality of these reports. They have come to the conclusion that childhood sexual molestation, seduction, and abuse are rampant in the real world, and probably always have been. Furthermore, contemporary psychoanalysts and writers such as Jeffrey Masson, Milton Klein, David Tribich, and others have attacked Freud's position that the neurotic problems he was treating had their sole origin inside the heads of his patients, that they were due to "developmental mechanisms" and were not the result of real events. Masson in particular claims that Freud's theory that his patients were merely fantasizing such childhood traumas in effect blames the victim and often deepens a sufferer's problems. (In a parallel way, if UFO abductions are taking place as event-level occurrences, labeling them as fantasies is immensely destructive to those who suffer their aftereffects.) The more investigators have raised valid questions about Freud's monolithic theories, the more the number of strict Freudian analysts has shrunk. Other therapies, more oriented to real, event-level problem-solving, are clearly in ascendence.

What are the lessons that history, our silent tutor, would have us learn from these revisions of basic Freudian doctrine? First, that any theory of human psychology unconnected to solid, objective information about the subject's actual experience and family background is a flimsy reed indeed. The isolated examination of a person's feelings, memories, and beliefs apart from the hard data of his or her life can be dangerously misleading, and investigation into fact and circumstance is essential if objective truth is to be arrived at. Freud's sudden change in attitude about childhood sexual abuse also teaches us how easily disturbing information can be shunted aside, even by highly intelligent people. Above all, we should learn to be wary of labeling as fantasy any consistent, widespread body of felt experience. Serious, objective inquiry must precede any such glib pronouncements, whatever our private, subjective doubts. It is all too easy to be wrong.

## The event level

It is indisputable that in the last few decades thousands of very similar UFO abduction reports have been collected and investigated world-wide. The sheer number of such reports obviously eliminates hoaxes as a single, umbrella explanation for the phenomenon, though undoubtedly some deceptions have occurred. We are left with two other explanations: either some—perhaps even most—of these reports describe real, event-level occurrences, or virtually all of them, instead, represent a contemporary, "mental," psychosocial phenomenon of some kind. Since systematic psychological testing of those claiming UFO abduction experiences has revealed no psychological explanation for their accounts, the only remaining explanation is the most philosophically unacceptable one: the witnesses are describing actual events. To discover the truth about this undeniably extraordinary phenomenon we must begin with a few basic questions:

(1) What is the literal content of the initial report?
(2) Why did the percipient feel he or she should make the report in the first place? (Thousands of individuals have reported their bizarre experiences to official agencies such as the police, the FBI, the Air Force, and NASA, and to civilian UFO investigators and organizations, with no hope of personal gain and with a legitimate fear of ridicule.)
(3) Where and when did the reported incident take place?
(4) Was the incident discussed with family or friends at the time it occurred?

During the 15 years in which I've been publicly identified with UFO-abduction research, thousands of people have called or written to me to report their experiences in detail, and consequently my personal data pool is extensive. Because the preliminary questions I've just outlined are so very important, I will dip into this pool for a few examples. The following are typical, unprocessed, uninvestigated reports as I first received them. I have spent a great deal of time investigating each of these reports, and in my opinion each eventually turned out to be what I consider to be a truthful account of UFO-abduction experiences. The information each contains— apparent content, date, location and number of witnesses —illustrates the complex circumstances any theory of UFO-abduction reports must satisfactorily address at the outset. I ask you to consider the details of each of these reports in the light of a single issue: do these reports seem to be real-world events, or the product

of simple, wishful fantasy?

(1) A young married couple are driving home from a weekend at the Jersey shore in the summer of 1974. It is late Sunday afternoon on a clear, sunny day. In what is perceived by both as the very next instant, it is pitch dark —night—and they are sitting in their silent car. The engine is not running, no lights are on, and their automobile is in the middle of a field rather than on a road. They are terrified, lost, and unbelieving. Many unremembered hours have obviously passed. The husband starts the car, and they bounce over the field for several minutes before he locates a dirt road and begins to find his way home. In the next few months there ensues a series of panic attacks which affect the husband particularly deeply. Neither he nor his wife thinks for a moment about UFO abductions; neither had read about such phenomena, and, since no UFO sighting is involved, neither would consider the experience to be related in any case. It will not be until early 1988, 14 years after the event in the field, that the woman in this example encountered a questionnaire I had written for *Omni* magazine and began to suspect that there might be a connection between the missing-time incident in the field and other odd events in her life. As a result of these suspicions she finally contacted me and the investigation began.

(2) About 7 p.m. one evening in the winter of 1968, Mrs. R is watching the TV news with her five-year old daughter and 12-year-old son. Her teenage daughter T is clearing the supper dishes. Mrs. R's baby is in his crib, and her oldest son has just driven off with his grandfather to go Christmas shopping. Suddenly the voice and the image on the TV screen change; an odd face appears, and Mrs. R becomes frightened. Her daughter T senses her mother's fear and becomes even more afraid because she seems transfixed, unable to move. In what seems to be the next instant Mrs. R is heard screaming but now from her bedroom at the back of the house. The 12-year-old son has disappeared from the living room and is later found hiding in a closet in his bedroom, though he does not remember what he is hiding from. Simultaneously, the family car pulls into the driveway; to those inside the house it seems the oldest boy and his grandfather have returned apparently only minutes after their 7 o'clock departure, and yet the clock shows that it is now after 9 p.m. An enormous noise begins suddenly, and the house vibrates as if a jet plane is about to crash into it, sending everyone into deeper panic. T looks out the window; the surrounding area is lit by a light brighter than the sun; her brother is standing beside the car, pointing up at something above the house. He is unmoving, rigid, as is his grandfather standing next to him. The noise abates, the light vanishes, and moments later the brother bursts into the room with a description of a huge UFO which had been hovering directly over the house and of his paralysis while observing it. He calls the state police to report the sighting and is astounded to discover that though he drove up and spotted the UFO at a little after 9, it is now past 11 p.m.; he has evidently been outside, unmoving, for nearly two hours.

The confusion of time and location and behavior is alarming to all six involved family members, but it is ascribed to "excitement" over the noise and the UFO and the strange image on the TV screen. Nevertheless the incident is remembered and frequently discussed by the entire family. Evidence of trauma remains for months and even years; the 12-year-old boy insists on sleeping with a baseball bat next to his bed, and T will go to sleep only when all the lights are on in her room. Twenty years later this same daughter watches a TV broadcast on which I am appearing; she relates the information I present about the UFO phenomenon to her family's trauma, and subsequently she contacts me.

(3) In November 1978 a young man driving home from work near East Islip, Long Island, experiences a flash of light, and in the next instant he finds himself sitting alongside a different road with his car nowhere in sight. He stands up, dazed and confused. He feels nauseated and discovers some unpleasant physical circumstances: his shirt is buttoned incorrectly, his shoes are untied, his socks are folded neatly in his pants pocket, and worst of all, he has, apparently involuntarily, defecated. Then he remembers being in his car while it was stopped, and trying to hide under the dashboard from a group of small, huge-eyed figures who finally pull him out of the vehicle. As these and other related traumatic memories flash into his mind, he eventually finds his car with its lights ablaze, off the road and mired in the underbrush, with no tracks leading to it through the foliage. During the first few hours of confusion he does not identify these frightening recollections and physical sequelae with the UFO phenomenon per se, but he eventually makes that connection, and I learn about the case.

(4) On a cold and snowy winter day in 1979, a 14-year-old girl goes for a ride on her snowmobile. She recalls heading into a level field, but then her memory fades. About an hour later a neighbor passing by sees her standing about 30 feet away from her snowmobile which is now lying on its side. He approaches her, asking if she needs help. She is clearly dazed and frightened, and the neighbor also notices that she is not wearing a coat. Moments later he finds her gloves, coat, and scarf neatly folded next to the overturned vehicle. She does not remember what happened. The neighbor drives her home, and her stepfather, a surgeon, examines her for any injuries, particularly to the head. He finds nothing—no mark or sign of an accident, or even any trace of hypothermia. CAT-scans follow, as well as several other neurological tests, all negative. Equally perplexing, nothing turns up in the flat, level field to explain why the normally stable snowmobile fell onto its side. There are no skid marks, no hidden wires, holes, or rocks. The girl recovers quickly but begins to suffer from a recurring nightmare in which she finds herself standing immobile

beside the overturned vehicle as a group of small, shadowy figures approach.

(5) In April 1961 a young second lieutenant is driving from New Jersey to Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Somewhere in North Carolina he realizes that he has only about a quarter of tank of gas and resolves to stop for fuel in the next town. He slows to a stop as someone who he assumes is a policeman flags him down; he is instructed to turn left and detour down a dirt road. He obeys, and as he drives down the narrow, dark lane, his car lights go out and the motor dies; yet his car continues on its own to move forward and *to rise in the air*. The terrified officer begins to pray, and in what he perceives as an instant later he awakens in a motel room, lying fully clothed on top of the bed. He rushes down to the front desk and finds that the motel is just outside the gate to Fort Jackson. Bewildered, he goes to the parking lot and locates his car which, he discovers, still shows a quarter of a tank on the gas gauge, and about the same mileage reading as he saw the night before on the odometer. The officer decides that he must have been drugged by the military in some kind of esoteric training experiment and that his car was shipped down to its present location on a flat bed truck. For this reason he tells no one except his wife about this impossible military exercise, a theory he abandons reluctantly after weeks of consideration. It will be another 20 years before he associates this experience with the UFO phenomenon; he hears a radio program on which periods of missing time are being discussed and contacts me.

(6) In the spring and summer of 1989, a married couple in northern California become troubled by their four-year-old daughter's frequent nightmares, in which she describes "monsters," small, black-eyed figures who come into her room at night "through the wall" and carry her off with them. The child's mother, uninformed about the UFO-abduction phenomenon, tries to assure her daughter that she was only dreaming, despite the child's insistence that the monsters are real. The most frightening moment for the parents comes when they are awakened one night by their daughter's screams from the front yard. The father unbolts the front door and rushes outside. The little girl stands there terrified, telling her parents through her tears that the monsters with the huge black eyes took her outside and into a "round thing" in the yard; they put her on a table and pressed a needle into her. To her father the most unnerving aspect of this event is the fact that when he searches the house he finds no unlocked windows, and each of the doors, like the front, is securely bolted from the inside. There is simply no way the child can have gone outside. In talking about this traumatic and impossible event with friends, the girl's mother first learns about similar reports which are allegedly connected with the UFO phenomenon. This disturbing information leads her finally to relate her child's story to me when I visit the city in which the family resides.

## The patterns

These six examples from my files illustrate the routes by which suspected abduction cases come to the attention of investigators, but more importantly they illustrate exactly the circumstances and details that comprise an individual's initial report. Obviously these details either are the result of fantasy and self-delusion or are accurate accounts of what the percipients feel has happened to them.

The first five of my examples have subsequently been thoroughly investigated. (The sixth, involving a very young child, by necessity rests upon a parent's testimony, and so it will not be included in this analysis.) These five cases involve a total of a dozen witnesses. All the details I have related were remembered normally; hypnosis is not an issue. *All* five reports include periods of missing time and impossible or illogical physical dislocations. All involve inarguable signs of trauma. In only one case is an actual UFO sighting involved, and only one (different) report includes a clearly recollected group of "aliens." Just one of the five reports was initially characterized as a "UFO case" by the witnesses, none of whom were well-informed about the abduction phenomenon at the time of their encounters.

Since the history of public awareness of UFO abductions is crucial to the viability of all psychosocial theories of the phenomenon, an exact chronology is essential. The first American abduction report became publicly known in 1966 (the Hill case), but seven years would pass before a second such case would be featured in the media (Hickson/Parker). In 1975 a third abduction report (Walton) became known, and a made-for-TV movie on the subject (*The UFO Incident*, about the Hills) appeared, but it was not until the late 1980s that such events were seen by the public in somewhat familiar detail. In this context it is significant that one of my five examples predates the first publicly known abduction case, and another predates the second, 1973 incident. A third example, from 1974, still predates the TV movie and any detailed general public awareness of UFO abductions, and the other two cases I recount predate both of my books on the subject. Thus any theory of the UFO-abduction phenomenon must deal with the fact that these reports (among thousands of others) arose prior to any general public knowledge of the abduction scenario and its sequence of detail. To make this point absolutely clear, all five of these bizarre events were described to other people— family members, friends, —at the time they first occurred —in 1961, 1968, 1974, and so on—and in none was an abduction experience suspected. In each case that suspicion surfaced later—days, months, years, even decades later.

Beyond argument these reports cannot be considered artifacts of belief in UFOs or the products of folkloric contamination by material absorbed from various 1980s UFO books and TV programs. As we have seen, the

perplexing elements that make up these reports are physical; they deal with the hard-edged kingdom of objects and sites, not the misty land of inward musing and fantasy. All five cases describe genuine trauma, confusion, clear-cut periods of missing time, and impossible dislocations experienced by the witnesses. (Similar accounts of vehicular dislocation, it should be mentioned, do not occur in movies and books until decades after these witnesses first reported them). Anyone wishing to theorize about the UFO-abduction phenomenon as fact or fantasy must begin with an explanation of the details contained in these initial reports. Obviously any theory of UFO abductions must satisfactorily account for the material I have just elucidated—or be discarded. For the record it should be mentioned that hypnosis was eventually used in my five sample cases to help the witnesses recall the unremembered portions of their encounters, and to explore other UFO incidents not included—or recalled—in their initial reports. From the outset and throughout their investigation, these five cases have conformed to the patterns present in hundreds of others I have explored.

Having established the initial requirements for theorizing about the nature of the UFO-abduction phenomenon, let us now consider the types of evidence that support the least convoluted explanation of these reports. That is, of course, the idea that these thousands of credible people are simply relating what actually happened to them. Sometimes the shortest distance between two points actually *is* a straight line.

## (1) Eyewitness testimony of an observed abduction

On January 3, 1979, in a rural area of southern Florida, Filiberto Cardenas, a male friend, and the man's wife and teenage daughter were driving home from a trip to some local farms. When their car inexplicably stopped, Cardenas and the driver stepped out to lift the hood to check the battery cables. All four saw a blinding light shoot down in front of them, accompanied by a buzzing sound. Cardenas was lifted up and out of sight as the two female passengers in the back seat of the car screamed in terror. The three stunned survivors reported the abduction to the police. Roughly an hour and a half later, Cardenas was found dazed and confused some 16 miles away from the place where he had been lifted up into the sky. As in other abduction cases, he found, on his body, pain in the legs, vision problems, and an abrasion. Hypnosis subsequently revealed details both typical and atypical of such abduction accounts, but centrally important is the eyewitness testimony of an abduction seen independently by nonabductees with normal recall.

## (2) Circumstantial eyewitness testimony

This type of corroborating testimony involves the witness' observing pre- or post-abduction details which are highly suggestive, though not absolutely conclusive. To make this more subtle point as clear as possible I will cite three different examples:

In the summer of 1983 in Indianapolis, Kathie Davis underwent a UFO abduction when a small craft landed on her property. At approximately the same time as the abduction ended and the craft took off, a next-door neighbor saw a brilliant flash of light through the trees, emanating from the place the UFO had apparently rested, according to the ground traces that were subsequently observed. Immediately after the flash the neighbor heard a loud roar approaching her house; the lights flickered, there was a power outage, and then all was still as the lights came back on spontaneously; no fuses were blown, and no circuit breakers had been tripped. The neighbor immediately informed her husband, when he arrived home that evening, of the frightening sequence of events; weeks later the two neighbors talked about their experiences and discovered the exact coincidence of time and event.

In October 1990 an intelligent, well-trained medical doctor was involved in a serious, personal conversation with his friend and houseguest, another physician. Though the hour was early, the guest abruptly interrupted their discussion, announced that he was sleepy, and immediately left the room to retire. The host watched his friend leave, feeling uneasy about the uncharacteristic behavior he had just observed. After a while he heard, just outside the house, a whirring, turbinelike sound which, in his phrase, "chilled him to the bone." Yet he was absolutely unable to bring himself to look outside for the source of the noise. Then, after a small, indeterminate sound in the house caught his attention, he turned and saw, in a virtually subliminal glimpse, a diminutive, large-eyed creature moving through the room. The doctor, who happens to be trained in psychiatry, found himself unable to do any of the things he wanted to do: investigate, go to help his friend, sound the alarm, or whatever. He had only one strong thought which came into his mind as if emanating from elsewhere: "This is none of my business." He finally stood up, went directly to his bedroom, lay down, and instantly went to sleep. It was not until the next morning that he was able to think clearly about his own strangely uncharacteristic behavior. His houseguest, as later investigation suggested, had been the sole target of the abductors and was, indeed, taken that night. The most important thing to be remembered about this example is that a trained medical professional witnessed what turned out to be preliminary incidents in the abduction of another physician by UFO occupants. Over and over again, nonabductee witnesses in other UFO abduction cases have described what seems to be the temporary, external control of their behavior; it seems the UFO occupants can do whatever is necessary to make sure potential witnesses to an abduction do not interfere with their operations. So, despite the importance of the witness's observation of an "alien" figure in this case, it

is almost as significant that a mature physician, thoroughly trained in psychiatry, personally experienced the efficacy of apparently external, anomalous control over his own reactions and behavior.

A third example of this kind of second-party circumstantial testimony involves two young women, first cousins and recent college graduates, in Houston, Texas. They shared a two-bedroom apartment, and late at night one of the young women awoke with the sensation of having being dropped from a few inches above her bed. Within moments she remembered—clearly—having just been inside a spacecraft; the memory was dreamlike but extraordinarily vivid. She recalled seeing small, black-eyed figures, a group of whom were carrying out some kind of physical procedure upon her naked roommate who lay stretched out on a metallic table. Alarmed by the realism of her "dream," she went into her friend's bedroom to check on her condition. She was shocked to find the room empty, though both young women had retired hours ago. The window was closed and locked, the bathroom unoccupied. Now thoroughly disturbed, she unbolted the front door and went outside to look for her roommate's car; it was exactly where it should have been, in the parking lot behind the building. She returned to their apartment and again searched for her friend. The bedroom was still empty, so she decided she must inform the police. As she picked up the receiver and began to dial, she heard a moan from her roommate's quarters. Rushing in, she found the missing woman face down on the bed, naked, her head at the foot of the bed and her feet on the pillow—and this only moments since she had last searched the room. She roused her roommate, and slowly, gradually, the young woman came to consciousness. Their memories of the UFO interior coincided exactly. There are many other corroborative details in this fascinating joint account, and though it seems that both women were abducted, one was apparently returned first and allowed to operate normally, outside any kind of "alien control." Thus she functioned as an independent, circumstantial witness during that time period.

## (3) Congruency of detail in UFO abduction accounts

It should be no surprise to anyone that when an abduction involves more than a single individual—and there are apparently thousands of multiple abductions—the witnesses' descriptions corroborate one another. This is true even when the incidents are investigated separately, in different localities, years after they occurred, with the use of regressive hypnosis and with different investigators involved in the research. But the most important corroborative details are those small, unpublished descriptions which investigators carefully save and store. For instance, I maintain a secret file of what might be called notational symbols: numbers, letters, whatever dozens of witnesses have reported seeing in and on UFOs during their abductions. I have shown examples of the two basic, closely related systems to a very few trusted colleagues; all have been astounded at the similarity—even identity—of these recollected symbols. But since these symbols operate as a means of testing the validity of new cases, I still cannot make this area of evidence public. This is indeed unfortunate because these notational systems provide evidence that undeniably places corroborating abductee testimony beyond the realm of chance.

Another specific example arises from the thousands of reports of physical examinations conducted during UFO abductions. It is highly significant that in no abduction report I have seen has a witness ever mentioned that the UFO occupants were curious about the one organ most central to our own thoughts about human anatomy: the human heart. Alien interest in the lower abdomen and the genitals is almost universally described, as well as procedures involving the head and nasal cavity. But never—*never*— the heart. Surely, if fantasy were at all involved in these reports, we would be hearing frequently about alien "EKGs" and the like, since we, ourselves, are so naturally preoccupied with this one vital organ. The fact this has never yet occurred in thousands of abduction reports proves once again that fantasy cannot be the creative factor in these accounts. Folklore, fantasy, dreams: these cover a limitless spectrum. The specific events actually reported do not; they consistently remain within the narrow range of actual, felt experience.

Short questions, short answers:

(1) Do physical traces accompany UFO abduction reports? Yes. Ground traces of affected soil where the craft have landed abound, as well as physical scars of two highly specific patterns on the bodies of abductees.

(2) When people report abduction experiences, are they physically missing from their homes, cars, or bedrooms? Yes. I have dozens of cases in which people who were literally missing were searched for during these "missing time" UFO experiences.

(3) When people awaken in bed and remember having been taken abducted and taken outside, is there ever any evidence that this is so and that the memories are not merely dreams? Yes. Many abductees find themselves with muddy feet, grass and leaves in their beds, and other such indications that they have been literally outside their houses.

(4) Are there other extensive categories of evidence suggesting these experiences are physically real, but which space does not allow us to elaborate upon? Yes, unfortunately. Many. ■

# Why abduction reports are not urban legends

by Thomas E. Bullard

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The similarity of UFO-abduction reports stands out as one of their most remarkable characteristics. A casual reader of the literature cannot help noticing the likenesses, and their number grows more impressive with in-depth comparisons. Most UFO evidence is anecdotal, and such evidence has a low repute. However honest, sincere, or reliable a witness may be, too many possibilities for error or distortion intervene between observation and report for a critical listener to accept the account entirely at face value.

This doubt comes not from innate meanness of spirit, but from caution born of experience. The tables turn when different witnesses report the same thing. Even the skeptically inclined then have to admit that something other than personal fantasy or idiosyncratic error is responsible for the report.

When multiple independent witnesses describe an event in a similar way, the reports earn a semblance of truth and the sanction of objectivity. We accept the described event as real. In most cases it is exactly that—a real event accurately reported—but there are some noteworthy exceptions. Almost everyone has heard strange stories of a driver who picks up a hitchhiker only to find that his passenger vanishes before reaching home, of the hippie babysitter who is supposed to put a turkey in the oven while the parents are away but roasts the baby instead, or of the girl who refuses to wash her beehive hairdo and soon dies from the bites of spiders nesting inside. Other stories tell of a poodle that explodes when placed in a microwave oven to dry, or earthworm meat mixed with commercial hamburger, or the passenger stranded naked at a busy intersection when he steps out of a camper as it stops for a light.

Various cycles of stories, some of them supernatural, some horrific, and some humorous, circulate around the country and around the world. These narratives are called modern or urban legends. Folklorists recognize these narratives as folklore because they are widespread; yet they localize so that many people think yes, I heard that story, it happened not far from here. Many people never realize that some of the strange stories they hear and pass along never really happened, that these stories are urban legends. They masquerade successfully as truth because they sound plausible even if incredible, and because most hearers are unaware that in the next community people tell the same story, but attribute it to a different location.

Similar stories pass here and there, go on for years, and hoodwink innumerable hearers into thinking that the event was unique. Folklorists have tried to chase down the beginning of these legends only to find themselves in pursuit of a mirage. Urban legends seldom if ever have a unique starting point. They are fictions posing as truths in most cases and multiplied by hearsay into thousands of replicas, none of which can be pinned down to any historical event. In some cases like the stories of dead mice found in soft drink bottles, court records prove that such events really occur; only this event has happened many times, and the reality helps sustain a much larger body of fictitious accounts.

Similar stories circulating in oral tradition drop a fly into the ointment. Here is proof that different people telling the same story may not report an objective experience after all, but only a shared fiction. Not even the fact that most abduction reports come from the witnesses themselves can rescue these narratives from a shadow of a doubt. If people learn the same story, it may guide their fantasies or shape an ambiguous experience into something more concrete. Persons who learn the same tradition may reinvent similar stories.

## Abductions and culture

In principle, abduction reports could be just another example of people swayed by the influences of movies, TV shows, science-fiction stories, or other abduction accounts. A story read and forgotten could still resurface in a dream or fantasy and control it unawares. A whole school of sociocultural and psychosocial UFO criticism blames abductions on just this sort of cause, with media images, psychological patterns, hypnotic susceptibility, fantasy-prone personalities, and overzealous investigators joining in various combinations to concoct a vivid and emotionally compelling pseudo-experience. The stories are alike, but still fictitious. The possibility that similarity in abduction reports is an artifact of various influences

must be recognized as genuine.

How can we separate truth from fiction, if we have to worry that a trusted sign of objectivity may in fact play us false? The usual argument for cultural influences or psychological underpinnings asserts that abductions resemble science fiction or folklore, and therefore must be a version of the same. Fairylore contains many instances of a mortal who enters an enchanted area and visits the fairy kingdom where time moves at a different rate than on earth. Shamanic initiates undergo a lapse of consciousness during which they are torn apart and reassembled by demons in a subterranean place, then return to consciousness with new knowledge and powers. Many science-fiction movies of the 1950s included aliens fleeing a dying planet, capturing earthlings, tampering with their brains, and experimenting with interbreeding. Parallels between abductions and other cultural phenomena run up a long list.

At the same time this list means little. With a bit of ingenuity and a large enough body of folk narratives to draw on, we could compare the automobile, the airplane, or antibiotics to the magical devices of folklore, but the discovery of parallels would not disprove the existence of these modern inventions.

The same problem holds true for abductions. So many potential cultural influences surround us every day that some of them must resemble abduction elements just by chance, if nothing else. Abduction reports may draw their content from these influences; then again they may not. The argument has as much (or as little) cutting power one way or the other. Something more persuasive would certainly be welcome.

Better evidence is available if we turn away from content and look at processes. Abduction reports may share some content motifs with fairy kidnap or shamanic initiations, but do these reports act like folklore? Narratives in oral tradition have their own dynamics. The way a story changes and grows with retelling follows characteristic patterns, and the folklorist has learned to recognize them. A comparison of abduction reports and urban legends with an eye to the working of normal folkloric processes offers a useful test for how closely related these two apparently kindred types of narratives really are.

The abduction story in its most elaborate form consists of eight episodes—capture, examination, conference, tour, otherworldly journey, theophany, return, and aftermath. Capture, examination, and return break down into their own characteristic sequence of events. Not every possible episode or event appears in every narrative, but whatever appears maintains the same relative position in 70 to 80 percent of 103 high-information, high-reliability cases. A single deviation accounts for most of the sequence differences.

Distinctive motifs also recur from case to case. The witness enters a disc-shaped craft with a domed interior, hard-to-breathe air, and sourceless, uniform lighting. The occupants are gray hairless humanoids of short stature, with large heads and large eyes, vestigial noses and slit mouths. These beings communicate by telepathy and warn of coming catastrophes on earth. Though polite, the beings are cold and indifferent to human suffering, especially during a sometimes gruesome examination that seems to be the main purpose of the abduction. The procedures often include a genital examination and the insertion of a small device into the head region. Abductions usually include strange effects such as flotation and memory lapse, and aftereffects such as physical injuries, psychological reactions, and personality changes.

Abduction reports allow a range of variety: The witness may be captured on the road, in the open, or in his bedroom. Night is the usual time, but some abductions happen in broad daylight. The examination room may be wedge-shaped as well as domed, and equipped in a variety of ways. Not all beings are alike, with mummylike creatures or tall, blond human or near-human occupants breaking the monopoly of short gray humanoids. Examination procedures sometimes vary; so do the length and elaborateness of the accounts. One report amounts to more than a slavish copy of another. Every example reflects a touch of the narrator's personality and embodies enough unique details to stand apart in some degree from the collective norm.

Even allowing for these deviations, abduction reports show a remarkable stability in the story they tell. Here is a lengthy and bizarre account full of opportunities for a narrator to rearrange the parts or forget their proper order, ripe, too, for the imaginative use of those influences from TV and the movies. If a narrator wanted to tell a strange adventure story or fantasized a dreamlike experience based on abduction themes, the possibilities seem endless for creative storytelling. For some reason abduction narrators fail to take advantage of the possibilities and stick with the same story—certainly a bizarre one, but oddly committed to the same pattern and content. These narrators hang suspended in a peculiar limbo: Their abduction reports are too strange for credible experience, yet too stable for good fantasy.

This incompatible combination of the too fantastic and the not fantastic enough brings urban legends back to mind. They, too, are amazing in content, certainly not the everyday experience, but at least marginally believable. At the same time the stories turn up hither and yon with enough similarity for folklorists to recognize the likeness, and for the tellers to react with surprise and bewilderment if they ever encounter other versions. In type of content and stability of story urban legends seem to have a lot in common with abduction reports.

The relationships thicken even more suspiciously in light of what purpose legends serve in folk literature. Tales are for entertainment, jokes for amusement, myths for preserving sacred truths about the origin and purpose of the universe. Legends have a sphere all their own. They are narratives that warn of what can happen to people, even people who go about their everyday busi-

ness without tempting fate or offending any supernatural powers. The legend protagonist is an ordinary person with no suspicions that unusual dangers lurk in ambush for him. Then, out of nowhere and without warning or justice, something strange, even endangering occurs and demonstrates that he is at the mercy of greater powers.

Barney and Betty Hill certainly belong in this category. They were simply returning home from a vacation trip when a UFO swooped down on them and their abduction experience began. They were helpless to resist the aliens and subjected to alarming procedures against all protests. The captives lost control of their wills and, in the end, of their memories. Legends show the human condition in dark hues. In older legends ghosts and witches filled the night with peril; in modern legends dangerous pollutions, lunatics at large, and uncontrolled technology fulfill the same roles. Modern legends remind us that the world is mysterious, our security is tenuous, and unfriendly powers or indifferent forces affect our lives against our wishes and beyond our control.

Abductions fit squarely into this picture. Aliens update the old-fashioned supernatural with similarly powerful, mysterious, and unpredictable agents, while extraterrestrial technology serves the same purpose as magic. In older folklore the fairies and ogres showed an inclination to kidnap that the aliens show today, only the supernatural has little foothold left in the modern worldview while life on other planets belongs at the forefront of modern belief. We almost take superscientific aliens for granted. This faith lends abduction reports the support of plausibility even as adaptations in the content rationalize the extraordinary claims. With these shifts the outmoded supernatural legend recovers its functions in the modern world.

The question then is not whether abduction reports can be legends. They certainly can, and UFOs in general constitute a form of modern folklore. The questions must be: are these stories anything else than folklore, do they have a basis outside human traditions of belief? UFOs qualify as folklore simply because they belong to unofficial culture, that body of beliefs held against and in spite of the denials of UFOs by governmental and scientific authorities. The observers, the experients, maintain a stubborn opposition and even continue to see what should not exist to be seen, so they constitute a folk group and preserve their unofficial knowledge as the lore of the group. Contrary to a popular image, folklore is not necessarily false. The old weather sign of a ring around the moon as harbinger of rain has a perfectly good meteorological basis, and folklore recognized ball lightning long before science lent its stamp of approval. In principle UFOs could be everything ufologists claim and still be folklore as well.

## The hook and the dead boyfriend

To separate a pure folk tradition from folk tradition plus something more requires a grasp of the processes that shape oral narratives. What happens to urban legends in general circulation? The answer establishes a benchmark to measure the stability of abduction reports, and by those measurements we can judge whether such stability is typical or out the ordinary.

An example from urban legendry will provide a qualitative measure for the processes of narrative variation. Readers may find this route circuitous, but by the time they reach the final destination, I hope they will have a clear idea of how these processes normally work and why they are important for the evaluation of abduction reports.

One of the first urban legends I heard went something as follows:

One night a teenage couple went parking on a country road. The radio announcer interrupted the music to report that a dangerous lunatic with a metal hook for one hand had just escaped from a nearby insane asylum. Though the boy paid no attention to this bulletin, the girl became nervous and wanted to go home. He resisted for a while, grew angry, then finally gave in and tried to start the car. It would not start. He checked the engine and decided that he would have to call a tow truck. The car was a long way from the nearest phone or gas station, and she was wearing high heels, so he decided that he could walk the distance better alone. She did not want to stay by herself, but he was a little worried by now and convinced her that they would get home sooner if he went on without her. He told her to lock the doors, then get down in the back seat and pull a blanket over her. Whatever you see or hear, he said, don't look up or make a move, and you'll be safe.

She hid under the blanket for what seemed like hours, and felt more frightened all the time. Then she heard loud noises outside, and the car shook as if someone or something had climbed on top. Once the sound of footsteps had passed, the car began to shake again, this time as if someone were trying to get in by tugging hard at one door handle after another. These noises ended after a while, and all was quiet until she heard what sounded like occasional raindrops fall on the roof. The drops pattered down for a while. Then the wind blew, and she no longer heard them, but when the wind was calm, the drops fell once again. Her fear so exhausted her that she finally went to sleep.

It was dawn when she heard a firm voice say, "Miss, this is the police. We want you to unlock the car and get out. Come on over to us and be sure not to look up." She did what they said, and the officers escorted her toward their patrol car, but she could not help looking back. What she saw was the skinned body of her boyfriend hanging head down from a tree limb over the car and still dripping drops of blood, while dangling from one door handle was a metal hook pulled off the arm of the escaped lunatic.

This narrative as I heard it was a well-told hybrid of

two narratives prevalent in oral tradition at the time (circa 1968). These two narrative types are distinctive enough for folklorists to identify them by name as "The Hook" and "The Boyfriend's Death."

The basic Hook story begins when the parking couple hears a radio bulletin about the escaped lunatic. The girl wants to go home; the boy resists but eventually guns the motor in anger and leaves. When they arrive home, they find the torn-off hook or other evidence that the lunatic had reached the car.

The Boyfriend's Death follows the latter half of the above story as engine failure compels the boy to go for help while the girl stays behind and hides. A night of mysterious sounds ends with the arrival of rescuers and discovery of the murdered boyfriend.

Though widely circulated and immediately recognizable, these two urban legends exist in a diversity of variants. Some of the aspects most likely to change are the following:

*Particulars of location, actors, and circumstances.* These stories localize all over the country and gain immediacy by happening nearby. Actors are usually high school or college students, often unnamed but sometimes identified. The hook-man may be an escaped lunatic or, less commonly, a convict on the loose or an embittered derelict offended by parking couples. One variant specifies a one-armed man who goes with his dog to Lovers' Lane and damages cars. A radical departure appears in the case where a war-injured man gone mad attacks the car in which his estranged wife sits with another man. In the Boyfriend's Death, the assailant may be the Hook, an anonymous murderer, a locally recognized maniac, or in some cases a crazy old woman given to flaying her victims. The rescuers may be police or passing motorists. A date, dance, or party provides the usual background circumstances.

*Motivation.* Some narrators rationalize the events of a story; others leave the listeners to infer their own reasons and motives. The amount of text devoted to filling in these gaps thus ranges from much to none. A convenient motive for leaving the girl behind is high-heeled shoes, but in other cases the boy is a good runner, or the girl wants to stay. Rescuers may be chance passers-by, patrolmen making a routine check, or police sent to search by the girl's parents. A radio announcement provides a clear reason to flee for home, but the warning may come from people in another car, shadows or silhouettes in the moonlight, scratching or other mysterious sounds, or the girl's premonition. A touch of exemplary justice enters in when the boy deliberately frightens the girl with scary stories about a hook-man, or the boy and girl joke about such stories and the people who tell them, only to find the scratch later. Another version explains that the boy wants to show his bravery and leaves the car to prove that the girl has no reason to worry, then sees the scratch. The boy may have no more reason to get out of the car than a need to relieve himself after too many beers, whereupon an entirely unsuspected assailant hangs him above the car.

*Length and detail.* Although these legends have a clear beginning and end with well-prescribed steps for reaching it, some room remains for narrators to add or take away details. Descriptions, orientations, and motivations are flexible from narrative to narrative. Sometimes the horrible appearance of the assailant is emphasized, or the girl's fear and the boy's disappointment, or the bloodiness of the hook after it is torn off. A common add-on motif in both stories comes at the end when the girl sees the hook on the door handle or the dead boyfriend; then her hair turns white because of fright. Some versions include this optional touch; many do not.

Changes in setting, motivation, and length are common to urban legends and abduction reports alike. These changes come and go without making much real difference in the story, and if nothing else characterized the variety of the texts, then we would have good reason to accept abductions as just another kind of urban legend. Only henceforth comes a parting of the ways as urban legends continue to vary long after abduction reports have stopped.

*Internal variation.* The straightforward story line of these legends still allows for a variety of intermediate events and final outcomes within the same plot structure. Finding the hook wrenched off is the usual proof that the hook-man was a genuine threat, but a few versions have the couple hear a scratching sound outside the car, then find a long scratch in the paint. Probably the commonest variant describes the telltale hook as dangling on the door handle, but in one alternative the girl rolls up the window just before the car roars off, and they find the hook caught in the closed window. A macabre variant on this variant says that the window stayed open, and the girl remained silent all the way home. The boy found out why when he saw that she was dead, with the hook embedded in her skull. Sometimes the whole meaning of the story changes as the hook-man appears as a harmless nuisance rather than a threat and becomes a victim as the speeding car tears off his arm, perhaps dragging him for a distance in the process.

Versions of the Boyfriend's Death deviate considerably over the ambiguous goings-on while the boy is away. Sometimes the girl sees shadowy forms, but more often she hears the patter of dripping blood, or intermittent scraping and knocking sounds from the fingernails or hair of the dead boy brushing against the roof of the car while his hanged body swings in the wind. In several versions the boy promises to knock three times when he returns, and she must not remove the blanket until she hears this signal. The knocks begin but continue beyond three, and later she finds that the dead boy's shoes were the cause. One version includes the three knocks and the girl looks up from her hiding place, only to see a demented face looking down at her from the roof of the car, and the keys dangling from the hook. The story ends at

this point and leaves the outcome to the listener's imagination.

The girl discovers her boyfriend's fate in a very different way when a youth gang attacks and shakes the car. These hoodlums throw an object in a paper bag at the windshield, and the contents prove to be the boy's head. A similar variant is popular among Mexican-Americans in southern Texas. A married couple run out of gas on the way home, and the husband leaves for help. The wife sees a bearded man approach and refuses to open the door when he knocks; he leaves a paper bag, and she finds her husband's head inside. According to another version, three men attack the car, but the wife chases them off with a gun. They leave the sack on the car, and she goes insane when she finds the head.

*Synthesis.* Simple and concise stories like these urban legends offer narrators only limited room for creative maneuvers within the confines of the story itself. Narrators sometimes escape to a plot with new possibilities by combining one legend with another. A need for motivation often drives the Hook and Boyfriend's Death toward unity. The ''pure'' strain of the Boyfriend's Death is vague about why the girl should hide, but the Hook specifies a convincing menace from the start. By grafting the radio episode onto the start of the Boyfriend's Death and subsequently identifying the murderer as the hook-armed maniac, the narrator ties up loose ends that might distract listeners from the story's emotional impact. The version presented at length above exemplifies this solution. Both narrative types circulate widely in their pure form, but they share many affinities. The scratching sound motif is a case in point. It interchanges readily between types and draws them together so that synthetic versions develop with ease.

Less closely related supernatural or horrific traditions already existing in a given locality sometimes fuse with these more widespread types to produce imaginative variants. In Louisiana a local legend of a half-man, half-animal monster combines with the Boyfriend's Death to provide a distinctive killer. An Indiana version combines elements of the Hook and the Boyfriend's Death with a third type, the Ghost on the Bridge: A couple parking by a bridge hear scraping sounds and drive away; later they hear a radio announcement that an escaped convict was found dead and mutilated near there, then find the bloody hook hanging on the door handle. Now the ghost haunts the bridge and moans for his lost hook. Another Indiana legend blends an inverted form of the Hook and the Boyfriend's Death with ghostly motifs. The story begins with the parking couple, only the girl becomes angry because the boy is leaving to join the Army. She leaves in a huff, and he is unable to find her, but later that night a farmer discovers her body under a bridge where she hanged herself. He buries her and reports to the authorities. When he takes them to the grave, it is empty. From that time onward, a ghostly creature with glowing eyes has torn dogs apart and chased teenagers who come near the bridge at night.

In eastern South Carolina diverse legends revolve around the Light at Land's End. This ghost light is usually harmless and does little more than shine in the distance or rush past the witnesses, but several variants mingle elements of the Boyfriend's Death with more sinister supernatural motifs. Teenagers who drive beneath the "hanging tree" may hear the sound of a body scrape across the car, then look back to see a ghost hold a lantern while he searches for his head. A more pertinent version tells of a newly married couple driving by Land's End when the car runs out of gas. The husband tells his wife to lock the doors while he goes for gas. While he is away, she sees the light approach; when he returns, he finds her dead and mutilated but sees no sign that anything broke into the car. Yet another variant has a couple driving in the area when the light appears and comes nearer. The car stops and fails to restart. The boy has the girl hide while he gets out to check the engine, and after she hears nothing from him for some time, she looks around and finds his head hanging on a stick.

*External affinities.* An even wider field of changes opens for the Hook and the Boyfriend's Death when they metamorphose into a very different story, distinct in content but parallel in plot structure or key motifs. Cemeteries are popular parking sites, and of course ghosts sometimes trouble the intruders. A spooked couple may drive off in haste and find a glove on the door handle as a token of ghostly visitation. An English story of young hoodlums who attack a motorist ends when he speeds away and later finds fingers in some part of his vehicle. When a couple spend a night in a supposedly haunted house, they hold hands for comfort. The girl hears rustling sounds, then discovers in the morning that she quite literally holds the boy's hand; the rest of him hangs from the rafters.

The Hook intercepts another well-known urban legend, the "Vanishing Hitchhiker," when motorists pick up a man on a rainy night. He says little, but the radio soon announces the escape of a hook-handed killer. The motorists grow more and more nervous until they drop off their passenger, who waves good-bye with a hooked hand, then vanishes away. Another distinctive urban legend, the "Hairy-Armed Hitchhiker," concerns a supposedly female hitchhiker who proves to have hairy arms. Now wary, the driver feigns engine trouble or claims that the rear light has burned out and asks the passenger to get out and check. When he does, the driver speeds off and later finds knives, hatchets, hooks, or other deadly weapons in a package the hitchhiker left behind.

Hatchets bring our two legend types into contact with another complex of horror stories where a hatchet or axe replaces the hook. One straightforward variant of the Hook tells of the passengers of one car yelling for the couple in another to tear out for town, the danger being due to a Negro with an axe standing on top of the car. The more common type is "The Roommate's Death," a

legend that leaves the setting of the Hook and Boyfriend's Death, abandons any overt reference to them, and yet keeps the story pattern and certain key motifs so that the resemblance is unmistakable. Two female students spend a vacation on campus; one stays in the dorm while the other leaves for a party, in spite of news reports of an escaped murderer. Later that night the first girl hears a "thump-thump, thump-thump" sound coming up the stairs. Frightened, she hides in a closet or under the bed and spends a night of terror while listening to scratching sounds on the door. In the morning she opens the door (or the police come to her rescue) and finds her dead roommate, who had dragged herself up the stairs and scratched on the door for help after the killer chopped off her legs and tongue with a hatchet.

Somewhat more remote is the "Killer in the Back Seat" cycle. The closest variant tells of a woman driving home at night when another car pulls up beside her and the driver speaks to her sharply, ordering her to fall in behind him and speed up quickly. When she does so, an axe-carrying assailant falls off the roof. More often the killer hides in the back seat and sometimes bears a hook. "The Babysitter and the Man Upstairs" has in common with the Boyfriend's Death a girl left alone and frightened when a maniacal voice on the telephone threatens her. The operator later warns her to get out of the house, and at the same moment the police arrive. It turns out that the operator realized that the maniac was inside the house with the girl, and the police find him upstairs where he has killed the children. Though far afield from the Hook or Boyfriend's Death, legends of this cycle share the crazy killer, warning authorities, and victims overhead.

## Abductions: unaccountably stubborn

I have belabored the details of these urban legends because they make an important point about abductions, even though unrelated to UFOs in content. What these examples demonstrate, and I hope in a convincing way, is that there is no right or wrong version of a folk narrative. A printed text of an oral narrative misrepresents its real nature, since this gives the impression that it is the one and only version, when in fact any one text captures a snapshot of one moment in the fluid, ever-changing career of a narrative tradition. Single versions are a myth aided and abetted by the printed page. The living reality of folk narratives is their variety. This fact should give pause to those critics who seek a universal psychological pattern in abduction reports, or identify a selection of cultural influences as the basis for an account repeated in its essentials by hundreds of people over three decades with remarkably little change. Comparisons of abductions to folklore lose an essential dimension if the measures of similarity treat content and form but ignore the dynamic processes of variation.

This exercise used only two urban legends. It could be repeated with any urban legend in circulation, and the results would be the same for all other types of living folk narrative. Any well-known folk narrative exists in a multitude of variants with every inner permutation realized, and at the same time spirals outward into layers of kindred but ever less similar variants. How diverse these variants become is apparent in the examples above. One text of an urban legend only sometimes resembles any other in more than general terms. The similarities may suffice to identify two variants as members of a type, but a great deal of difference may separate typemates. Abduction reports differ in many details, but extensive parts of the story that could change simply do not, against all expectations for folklore.

In fact, urban legends embody a minimum of variation potential, and in this important respect they are less than ideal comparisons for abduction reports. Urban legends are extremely concise. Few episodes separate beginning from end; the narratives are well-structured in dramatic form, with information withheld at the first to build suspense and a final surprise. By contrast abduction reports are long and loosely constructed stories. They can and should vary with ease, just as other folk narratives vary in proportion to their length. The abduction story makes just as much sense if the examination follows the conference or the scanning device does its work after the implant is inserted. Nevertheless examination and scan come first with seldom a deviation, in spite of no logical reason for them to stay in one place. The story means the same thing and sounds just as good either way.

Urban legends have relatively few opportunities to vary; yet narrators exploit every one: abduction reports have boundless opportunities to change; yet their narrators cling to one fixed pattern with unaccountable stubbornness. If the self-contained urban legend story cannot resist the tinkering impulse, how does the far more vulnerable abduction story survive?

Arguments that mass media fix the abduction story pattern in the public mind fall flat in folklorists' studies of media transmission. Modern communications certainly spread folklore widely and with speed, but they are not the agents of homogenization that folklorists once feared. Media serve only as one more voice in the transmission of folklore. As soon as the next narrator repeats an item, he usually begins the process of variation. In fact, media even add to the sum total of variation by exposing more people, more potential narrators, to a story. This predicted outcome has failed to come true in the case of abductions. Abduction reports then are not urban legends because they fail to act as urban legends should. If abductions were fantasies influenced by popular culture or ideas borrowed from other abduction accounts, the story pattern should have strayed far and wide by now. Today's abductions should bear little resemblance to those of 20 or even 10 years ago. The old pattern might

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# Notes on time travel

by David M. Jacobs

■■ **David M. Jacobs, Ph.D., an associate professor of American studies at Temple University, is the author of *The UFO Controversy in America* (1975). His book on the abduction phenomenon, *Secret Life*, will be published next March by Simon and Schuster.**

In the September/October 1990 issue of *IUR*, Michael D. Swords discusses in cogent and stimulating fashion the possibility of time travel. In reflecting on the same issue, I can only envy Prof. Swords his scientific background. Unfortunately I am left to ponder it without much foundation in time-travel theory. With my limitations here conceded, I would like to pass on a few thoughts about the problems inherent in linear time travel and briefly touch upon a related subject.

Linear time travel presents us with certain "logical illogicalities" that must assuredly follow. If one can go back in time, it means that the future exists as a complete series of events that are fixed in time. In order for there to be a present or future, there must be a past to go back to. This automatically means that "history" is a continuum which stretches not only backwards but also forwards into the future. It means that the future is already determined because we live in somebody's past and that somebody therefore must live in the future. Following this logic, it also means that that person in the future also has a future that is already determined because he is living in somebody else's past. Therefore the future has, in effect, already happened. It is already past. In a sense there is no future, and there is no past. All efforts to effect change are predetermined since the change already took place and, in a sense, no change can therefore take place. The future becomes immutable.

Moreover, in time travel "loops" are inexorably created, and they are unchangeable. If one travels back in time, the act of coming back automatically foreshadows the future. The direction of the present is unalterably pointed toward the goal of people's eventually traveling back in time. All acts to prevent or permit time travel ultimately result in its occurrence. Since the past always exists and the act of time travel is proof of the predetermination that people will be traveling back, there is absolutely no possibility that the loop will ever be broken, the time travelers come back from the future over and over again, *ad infinitum*.

Coming back through a "wormhole" scarcely changes the scenario. Sitting outside time, as it were, and entering at a specific place means that the time continuum that is entered into must exist on a time-line with all the attendant difficulties outlined above. If the visitor enters at the forward point of the time line (the present, in other words) and if, in some way, no future time-line has been established, then that person cannot possibly be a time traveller *from* the future.

Can one go back in time and kill one's great-great-grandfather? I do not know. But if one does do it, that murderous deed sets in motion a series of events that must eventually result in a future in which one goes back in time and kills one's great-great-grandfather.

Swords correctly says that time travel does not answer the mysteries of UFO abductions as we know them. But he also suggests that time travel is the only scenario possible for the production of offspring that abductees describe so frequently. He says that the use of nonhuman genetic material would not be feasible for this task. That is to say the aliens would have to be humans to produce the offspring. But the abductees' morphological descriptions of aliens strongly militate against this possibility. Although their gross anatomy may be similar, strong evidence exists for very different biological processes taking place—processes that would preclude them from being future humans. Furthermore, we are scarcely in a position to know what is feasible or unfeasible in alien biotechnology.

For now, let us stick to the data as the abductees present them. Until we have enough evidence that suggests the beings are time travelers, it behooves us to adhere to the simpler hypothesis until it becomes untenable: alien extraterrestrials have come here in "real time" to conduct clinical procedures upon humans for their own purposes, and part of those procedures is the production of offspring. ■

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# Letters

## Circles, natural and unnatural

*To the editor*:

The objections to a natural explanation of most crop circles remain, including those I raised before in these pages ("Letters," May/June 1990). Among those are the cases of multicircle symmetrical patterns, often oriented to the cardinal compass points, and the extreme odds against these being formed by unpredictable natural processes.

I venture to share a few more:

Some of the circles display radial or linear patterns of crop laying, which do not at all suggest the work of vortical winds. Patterns swirled in contrary directions and layered atop one another in certain circles seem to indicate a force that can quickly reverse its spin while in the process of creating a circle. This also seems unlikely in a weather phenomenon. There are examples of all the patterns and features referred to above in cases in which investigation has ruled out hoaxes.

Concerning the so-called pictograms:

Since research continues to try to link these to wind-vortex activity, among those who credit such an explanation, might we not assume by this that hoaxes were not found to be the cause, thus making further research seem worthwhile?

I understand that crop-circle hoaxes have proved to be reasonably easy to detect, given the fact that the crop stems are broken, bruised, or crushed by the conventional mechanical means used by hoaxers. In circles that were not hoaxed, the grain is typically not damaged at all, merely gently laid over.

The wind-vortex explanation is seriously doubted in pictogram formation, for what seem sound reasons. The evidence for hoaxing is lacking or seriously questioned here. I think we must consider the possibility of attempted communication.

*Michael R. Watson*
*Sonoma, California*

*To the editor*:

Hooray for Jenny Randles! Her article "Nature's Crop Circles, Nature's UFOs" (*IUR*, May/June) provides some refreshing views on the circle controversy. Finally, some much-needed demographics have been given for the British wave of crop circles. Perhaps now many statements and comments can be clarified, and parts of the puzzle can fall together more easily.

Randles notes my comments from the March/April issue of *IUR* when I stated that "circles have been evolving with time" and increasing in numbers over the years. She points out that the "evolution" and numerical increase in crop circles are largely an *appearance* of these effects, caused by a number of factors including increased public attention. Furthermore, she offers some suggestions on the numbers of "real" crop circles found during the recent wave and says these numbers have been affected by hoaxing and fringe elements.

I agree wholeheartedly with this view. My comments on the increases in numbers and complexity were based partly on media reports but also derived from the confusing information supplied by various cerealogists. To some, *all* crop circles are bona fide, while to others, few are.

Grant Cameron and I have asked crop-circle researchers for breakdowns of the types of circles found over the past few years. Catalogs of "agriglyphs" are useful, but what of the numbers of "ordinary" circles versus complex ones? The information received until now has been confusing, to say the least. This appears to have been partly due, we are sure, to researchers' hoarding of crop-circle data.

We had suspected from the beginning that complex forms were the exception, rather than the rule, but we were having trouble verifying this hypothesis. Cameron has suggested that only a few percent of all crop circles were complex in form, and this seemed to be supported by the North American Institute for Crop Circle Research (NAICCR) report which found out about this ratio in the 1990 North American circles. I am glad that Randles has addressed the problem of escalation of crop-circle attention and the appearance of changes.

The problem of eyewitness testimony is still thorny. It appears to be intimately linked to the comparison between saucer nests and crop circles as well as the theories regarding UFO origins. If, as Randles believes, UFOs are often ionized vortices, then crop circles, close encounters, and other observations/effects could be characteristics of such vortices. Some nuts-and-bolts ufologists, on the other hand, consider crop circles, saucer nests, and close encounters to be evidence of extraterrestrial intervention. My view is that of poststructuralism: no theory is completely correct, nor is it incorrect. There are always exceptions to the rule, and interpretations are based upon the theorist's own preconceptions and disposition.

I have investigated UFO cases that seem to be ascribable to the ionized-vortex category, but there are others that seem to stretch this classification. For example, I don't think that Randles' interpretation of the Rosedale, Australia, case which she cites is a good candidate for the vortex theory. For one thing, if the water in the tank had been "evaporated," as Randles suggests, by the vortex, it would have likely needed

much more energy than is assumed, even if the object was a large ionized plasma.

I, like Randles, find the evidence for extraterrestrial spacecraft less than completely convincing, but I am also doubtful of the mechanics of Terence Meaden's theory. I think the point is that crop circles can be used to support any particular theory, but we must be sure that we can have access to the raw data so that we can refine our theories more effectively.

I do agree that a search for historical circles is in order. As I have stated elsewhere, however, Ted Phillips' *Physical Traces Associated with UFO Sightings* (CUFOS, 1975) contains many cases that seem similar to crop circles. Randles' view that the large numbers of recent circles are artifacts of various factors actually supports my contention that crop circles are in fact more closely akin to saucer nests than many cerealogists would like to admit. But her statement that the discovery of historical circles would necessarily prove a "natural force" was responsible does not logically follow. It would support both the ETH and the vortex theory.

One thing that might be useful is a comparison of crop circles with CE2 UFO ground markings for Britain during the past few years. (Such a comparison may have been produced, but I have not seen it.) The NAICCR report for North America included a wide variety of saucer nests, crop circles, burns, holes, and other effects which we grouped under the broader term UGMs (unidentified ground markings). Given the vortex theory, an examination of all of these effects would be desirable, as I can foresee arguments why any or all of them could be explained by the theory (which, according to Karl Popper, is one reason why the theory is probably not correct).

I don't think Meaden's vortex theory can be comfortably embraced at this time. Quantitative discussions on energy requirements and empirical studies are needed before we could begin to endorse his theory (or any theory). At this point Meaden's vortex is at least as likely as the ETH, unfortunately. (The situation was recently summed up by Conrad Fort, who remarked, "[Paul] Devereux's earthlights, [Michael] Persinger's tectonic strain, and Meaden's vortices—all of them caused by a previously undocumented form or natural source of energy or force!") Yet diligent researchers can work to produce supporting documentation for the vortex theory; it may well be that Mother Nature does indeed have a few tricks up her sleeve. But the vortex theory hardly fits the bill.

Ultimately we should agree to disagree on the matter. What is important is the fact that studies are being done by researchers with a variety of approaches, and each of their efforts contributes to our epistemology.

*Chris Rutkowski*
*Winnipeg, Manitoba*

## UFO sketches

This letter is addressed to *IUR* readers who have witnessed a UFO.

I am doing dissertation research using sketches of UFOs, with the purpose of demonstrating the substantial accuracy of eyewitness testimony. If you have seen a UFO and would like to participate, I need a simple sketch of the UFO you saw on a 6x8-inch card (or half sheet of standard typewriter paper). If the UFO was near the ground or landed, sketching in the horizon and a few other details would be helpful. On the front draw an arrow indicating the "up" direction and mark the word "actual." On the back indicate the last four digits of your Social Security number, your sex, age, occupation, date of sighting, date of drawing, and estimated size of the object.

Next draw a second sketch on a separate card of what you think a *typical* UFO might look like. Again mark an arrow on the front to indicate "up" and write the word "imagined" to distinguish it from the "actual" drawing. Put your four-digit number on the back.

Send both sketches, with your return address, to me at the address below. Participants will be sent a three-page questionnaire (for details of the sighting) and another drawing to copy.

*Linda Kerth*
*Box 5064*
*Pittsburg, California 94565*

## Belgium—*continued from page 8*

surface with some fins. After parking their car along the side of the road, the witnesses watched the object for another minute or two. Hardy estimated that the object was 90 meters above the ground and 200 meters from him. He made these estimations using a high-tension pylon situated behind the UFO as a reference marker.

The moment Hardy turned on his four headlights, the object began to move in a linear and uniform way in the direction of Hannut. ■

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## EDITORIAL—*continued from page 3*

it is hardly surprising that before his death the good soldier Ruppelt went back to the Book, the Blue one. In May 1958 he told an inquirer, "I have visited Project Blue Book since 1953 and am now convinced that the reports of UFOs are nothing more than reports of balloons, aircraft, astronomical phenomena, etc. I don't believe they are anything from outer space."

Keyhoe was dismayed. Only a few months before, Ruppelt had assured him of his continuing sympathetic interest in UFO reports and indicated the Levelland, Texas, sightings of November 1957 had impressed him. In the pages of NICAP's *U.F.O. Investigator* Keyhoe implored Ruppelt not to endorse the policies he had so emphatically criticized not all that long ago.

But the daring, iconoclastic stance *Report* took was not one the book's author—who in the end, in common with the rest of us, could be no more than who he was—could long sustain. He remained close to the Air Force and his old Air Force friends, and it would be only a matter of time before he fell in line. In 1960, the year Ruppelt died of a heart attack, the book reappeared with three new chapters. This time UFOs were a "Space Age myth," Keyhoe a well-meaning crank, and contactees a convenient vehicle by which the whole concept of interplanetary visitation—which the original *Report* had implied was a reasonable inference from the UFO evidence—could be ridiculed. Ruppelt was now happy to endorse an official UFO project so shabby, so sloppy, so biased, so manifestly an exercise in hand-waving, *ex cathedra* pronouncing, and arrogant posturing that not even unofficial UFO debunkers, whose own standards are not notably high, have bothered to defend it.

In the end Ruppelt turned out to be no hero, just another apologist with nothing interesting or original to say. But the extraordinarily puzzling cases the first *Report* recounted were, and are, no less extraordinary, no less puzzling. One would like to think that somewhere inside him Ruppelt knew that, too.

Still, whatever the limitations of Ruppelt the human being, the 1956 version of *Report* is a heroic book, among the essential works in the UFO literature, a continuing reminder to all thoughtful readers that the UFO question, with all its unsettling and profound implications, defies conventional accounting and demands urgent attention. No one has summed up the essential issue better than Ruppelt did when he wrote:

"What constitutes proof? Does a UFO have to land at the River Entrance to the Pentagon, near the Joint Chiefs of Staff offices? Or is it proof when a ground radar station detects a UFO, sends a jet to intercept it, the jet pilot sees it, and locks on with his radar, only to have the UFO streak away at a phenomenal speed?"

The Ed Ruppelt of 1956 clearly thought the latter was sufficient. Thirty-five years later I see no reason to disagree.—*Jerome Clark*

## Urban legends—*continued from page 20*

persist, but the center of gravity for this story should shift over time to new forms and meanings. A host of types based on the abduction theme should feed sensation-hungry audiences with a steady diet of novelty. The "underground aliens" yarns of a few years ago certainly showed no bashfulness in proliferating into ever more extreme variants, but abduction stories have proved far more modest in their changes. When the accounts have changed at all, the quality of those changes has been more like a gradual revelation of events inherent in the story all along but difficult to express or understand. The exuberance of fiction, rumor, and speculation stands out all the more strongly by contrast.

What glues abduction reports together, if not folk tradition? The answer comes back to the alternative explanation of shared experience. A recurrent experience would give similar reports, and they would stay the same as long as the experience remains stable. Differences in detail then trace to minor differences in experience, or latitude in the way witnesses perceive or describe their experience. Abduction reports are not folk narratives in the generally recognized sense, and unless we learn some new and surprising things about such narratives, abductions will continue to deserve treatment as a separate phenomenon. The folklorist cannot answer what kind of experience the abduction is, but he has sound reasons to say what it is not.

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